

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Concerned with the health and safety of the staff and of the inmates at Elkton Prison in Elkrum Township, Ohio, Congressman Charlie Wilson (OH-6), Rep. Tim Ryan (OH-17), and Senator Sherrod Brown wrote the following letter to the Department of Justice's Inspector General:

Mr. Glenn A. Fine, Inspector General

U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 4706
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Inspector General Fine:

We write to you today in regard to Elkton Prison in Elkrum Township, Ohio. In 2007, a preliminary report issued by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) revealed that workers and inmates at the Elkton Prison were exposed to unsafe levels of cadmium and lead. Levels of airborne lead dust at the facility have at times reached 50 times higher than the federally accepted level for workplaces. While we were relieved to learn that cleanup efforts are finally underway at the Elkton facility, we continue to have concerns regarding the health and safety of personnel and inmates.

In your letter dated February 1, 2008, we were informed that occupational physicians from National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) would be on-site with OIG investigators and a representative from Federal Occupational Health Services (FOH) to examine the health concerns related to the electronic recycling operations at Elkton Prison. During the investigation and subsequent report issued August 2008, NIOSH cites that Elkton continues to face legacy contamination of the factory, the Federal Satellite Low (FSL) and warehouse.

As you are aware, disassembly and glass breaking occurred at the factory from 1997 until early 2003. During this time inmates and staff were without respiratory protection or any type of engineering control in place to minimize exposures during the glass breaking operations. Since exposure to toxic materials was the greatest prior to the implementation of the glass breaking booth, we have great concern regarding the health of the staff and inmates during this time.

What steps is the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) taking to ensure that correctional officers and staff, and the prison inmate workers at Elkton exposed during this time are being medically monitored for early detection of illness as a result of this exposure? Is the BOP using the most complete medical testing available to monitor these individuals?

As you continue to move forward in your investigation of Unicor and the electric recycling program at Elkton, we request that special attention be paid to this issue and addressed thoroughly in your investigation and final report.

Furthermore, the report issued a number of recommendations including:

In light of the important health and safety considerations in this case, what action is being taken by the BOP to evaluate Unicor's operations from the perspective of health, safety and the environment? Has BOP taken the necessary steps to implement a comprehensive program to assure both staff and inmates a safe and healthy workplace?

Given the importance of this matter we appreciate your swift response and look forward to continuing to work with you. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly or Chris Slevin with Senator Brown's staff at (202) 224-2315, Melissa Benish of Congressman Wilson's staff at (202) 225-5705, or Ryan Keating in Congressman Ryan's office at (202) 225- 5261.

Sincerely, Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

Charlie Wilson
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress